

The Missionary Herald

Newsletter of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

REQUIRED READING FROM BISHOP NEWBIGIN

Regret and rejoicing mingle in American Board hearts at the news that Bishop Lesslie Newbigin of the Diocese of Madura and Ramnad, Church of South India, will become, in June, General Secretary of the International Missionary Council. We did not recruit this great missionary, but we inherited him as he came into leadership of the Madura area in 1947. Now we, and the Church of South India, are to "lose" him; but only to that significant, if somewhat shadowy, world of ecumenical church life in which we have so great a stake.

By writing an exceedingly trenchant and imaginative little book, expressly for discussion in all mission circles, Bishop Newbigin has already gotten in his first good blow as leader of the I.M.C. Containing 56 pages and entitled "One Body, One Gospel, One World; The Christian Mission Today," it is being mailed to all American Board and B.I.M. missionaries and Corporate Members of the American Board, and is available from the I.M.C. (156 Fifth Ave., New York 10, N. Y., 25 cents). It provides a natural focus for the first of the theological discussions which this journal will encourage.

Behind the book lies a conviction that missions today are in a critical situation. One reason cited is a certain loss of belief "in the sufficiency and finality of the Gospel." (But what do "sufficiency" and "finality" mean? That a knowledge of the Gospel is sufficient to redeem a society is abundantly disproved by the gross failures of Christendom — medieval, American or Kuomintang! Does "finality" mean that since Second Peter we have had no further revelation of what the love and power of God mean, through science, historical study, psychology? And do not these revelations continue?)

INTRODUCING: *An Old Masthead With A New Magazine Under It*

Perhaps the term "magazine" isn't just right for so modest a publication as this. Yet we trust it will have in it enough passion for world mission, solid information about the people and the works of the American Board and its partners, provocative opinion about better ways to do what we are doing and better things to do, so that it will be a not utterly unworthy successor of the great *Missionary Herald* of the past.

In a way this little journal is an expansion of the informational letters to The Fellowship of Those Who Care. In addition, it is to serve as a "house-organ" for members of the family of the Board of International Missions of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, as well as of the American Board. Periodically, we expect to turn the section on Board news over to the Board of International Missions for full treatment of their own personnel and events.

Moreover, we intend to present with each issue some major topic of the theology, philosophy or strategy of world mission. Reactions are invited! Also, suggestions for future issues, due approximately five times each year. We hope that missionaries as well as staffers will be writing for us. *Brief* letters to the Editor may become a regular feature.

The most grievous problem, however, says Bishop Newbigin, is the lack of an adequate "myth" of missions today. Livingstone's picture of the smoke of a thousand villages where the Gospel has never been heard is no longer relevant; because these "regions beyond" have all been traversed. (But have they? Need we discard so completely the symbols and the strategy of the 19th century?)

For our time, obsessed with the threat of nuclear erasure through war, he proposes as a basic vision: "The

whole church, with one gospel of reconciliation for the whole world."

This vision obviously demands a much more effective and evident degree of Christian unity. For the present divided state of the churches utterly belies the gospel of reconciliation and wholeness. Nothing less will do "than a form of unity which enables all who confess Christ as Lord to be recognizably one family in each place and in all places, united in the visible bonds of word, sacrament, ministry and congregational fellowship . . . one family offering to all men everywhere the secret of reconciliation with God the Father."

(To a remarkable degree the Roman church fits this prescription; and as we go to press the Pope is calling for an ecumenical Council to forward Christian unity. Is this a clue to the way ahead? Or is it a *reductio ad absurdum* of the notion that the unity of the church must be the ground of effective mission? Or a little of both?)

Clearly, in this line of thought, the meaning of the adjective "missionary" is vastly expanded beyond conventional home and foreign mission projects. Newbigin essays a redefinition: Missionary action consists in "*the crossing of the frontier between faith in Christ as Lord, and unbelief.*" Thus "the missionary frontier runs through every land where there are communities living without the knowledge of Christ as Lord."

But then why bother with "foreign missions?" Why take a trip to tell the Gospel? For America is a prime mission field on this definition. Here is a real and burning question (reflected, for example, in the steady and catastrophic decline of Congregationalist giving for overseas missions as compared with that for homeland interests.)

To this question Bishop Newbigin returns these cogent replies: (1) It belongs to the essence of the Gospel that it concerns the ends of the earth; (2) By the very nature of the gospel we have to hear it from someone else, not out of private mystical experience. And this means that it is often most effectively spoken by a "foreigner"; (3) And because Christians are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, the fact that the Church in its mission "deliberately and systematically transgresses the boundaries of nation and culture is an indispensable symbol and instrument of its supernatural calling."

(But immediately one imagines the response: These requirements are fulfilled in that modern version of "foreign missions" called Inter-church Aid. By placing funds and personnel at the disposal of sister churches, or ecumenical agencies in which all churches participate as equals, by right, with full access to the common treasury, we exhibit concern for the ends of the earth, show the supra-national character of the church and put at the service of the world church evangelists of all races and tongues.)

Here we come close to the existential crux of the discussion. For its background is the approaching merger or "integration" of the World Council of Churches, with its effective program of Inter-church Aid, and the International Missionary Council, representing the traditional foreign missions programs. To what degree should the former swallow up the latter, in structure and in conception?

Most powerfully Bishop Newbigin urges that we must have, not less "mission" than hitherto, but more. Already the most serious criticism of missionary operations "is that they are so largely bogged down in a sort of trench warfare; that the resources of the older churches are largely exhausted in helping the younger churches to remain where they are." Too much emphasis on "Inter-church Aid" and too little on the "mission to the world" already!

Perhaps the way out, the author suggests, is through steadily cleaving to the perception that since the Church is a mission, true Inter-church Aid will always be primarily aid *for mission*, not for existing ecclesiastical structures and institutions.

Apparently, then, a church is fit to receive missionary aid only if it has a greater interest in carrying on mission than in preserving its own life. A church is fit to *extend* missionary aid only if it exhibits in its own life authentic signs of renewal by the Gospel. And how is such complementary and reciprocal fitness to be attained?

Perhaps, says Bishop Newbigin, a new Third Order of Protestant missionaries is required, dedicated, sacrificial, disciplined, (celibate?) available for ecumenical duty at any time and any place. The works and words of Bishop Newbigin illustrate the spiritual power of such persons. What about ours?

AMERICAN BOARD CHRONICLE

January 1-February 15, 1959

Born: to Mr. and Mrs. (Dr.) William C. Dizney of the Rhodesia Mission, a daughter Desmion Margaret, on December 31, 1958, in Berea, Kentucky. (Just couldn't leave out little Desmion, even though she came a day early!)

In Memoriam: James Dexter Taylor, 83, for 50 years a member of the South Africa Mission, who died February 11, at Newton, Massachusetts.

Voted: by the Prudential Committee — That on the occasion of his inauguration as President of Chicago Theological Seminary the American Board express to Dr. and Mrs. Howard F. Schomer its appreciation for their 12 years of service in Europe.

That Miss L. Lillian Picken of the Marathi Mission be made a missionary emeritus of the American Board, and that appreciation be expressed for her nearly 45 years of devoted service in India.

Staff: Mrs. Chester G. Starkey (Jane) has moved upstairs from her familiar place in the Purchasing and Shipping Department and will now serve as Administrative Assistant for the Foreign Department, as well as Employment Officer.

NEWS FROM THE FIELDS

India and Ceylon

Many Christians in India are rejoicing in the settling of a division in the ancient Syrian Church in India between the advocates of the claims of the Patriarch of Antioch (Patriarch's party) and the Indian Catholicos (Catholicos' party) to the ultimate control of property in that church in India. After more than fifty years of litigation the matter has finally been settled in favor of the Catholicos' party, but while he will henceforth have control of property, the church will still grant spiritual pre-eminence to the Patriarch. Since members of this church are serving in many key positions in other churches all over India, the settlement of this dispute may be regarded as a forward step for Christianity as a whole.

Philippines

The Industrial Evangelism program has made a significant beginning in 1958. Headed by a missionary with experience in industrial area churches in western New York state and by a lawyer (labor union counsel) with a Bachelor of Theology from Silliman's College of Theology, the Department has already completed a survey of Mindanao's lumber industry and plantation areas and will move into the Visayas in 1959. 1958 included a Church and Industry Conference, bringing Christian labor and management leaders together; a Young Workers in Industry Conference, exploring with Christian youth in industry the meaning of Christian vocation; and, of course, the Asian Conference on Industrial Evangelism, for which Doshisha University's Masao Takenaka furnished outstanding leadership.

The Near East

The field visit of the Near East Secretary from mid-March to mid-May, centers around a conference to be held at Asmara, Eritrea, Ethiopia on "The Christian Faith and the Contemporary Middle Eastern World." The Presbyterian Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations which is calling the Conference has had correspondence with all Christian bodies at work in the Moslem world and it is expected that 100 delegates will be gathering in Asmara in April. Three members of the Near East Mission in Turkey are expecting to go.

South Africa

Inanda Seminary has been given permission to continue for another year, and its position relative to the government has apparently eased slightly. However, the staffing situation is very serious, no local teachers being available or willing, and the American Board apparently being unable to find replacements.

The Rev. and Mrs. John McElvey of Northern Ireland have been appointed by the London Missionary Society to work at Adams Theological School with American Board staff. Mr. McElvey is well qualified for this task, having had excellent preparation and experience in Britain and a year's graduate study in Theology in Pittsburgh. He is now completing the work for his Ph.D at Oxford.

Japan

"Songs of the Heart" featuring the AVACO Chorus under the direction of Megumi Hara and short sermons by Mr. Shinjiro Noro, famous music critic and Christian layman, now is broadcast over three stations, including coverage of the two most populous areas of Japan, Tokyo and Kobe. This program alone is bringing over 200 mail inquiries each week. Each correspondent is sent a folder including several Christian hymns and is given an introduction to the church nearest his home.

AN AMERICAN BOARD DILEMMA

In the major American Board address at the Midwinter Meeting of the Missions Council, February 2-5, Dr. Carleton gave an analysis of American finances which provoked considerable soul-searching. In the most recent decade for which figures are available, our expenditures showed the following increases:

Ecumenical Projects up \$37,000 or 123%

Home Administration up \$69,000 or 40%

Promotion and Service to Churches
up \$150,000 or 94%

Field Budgets up \$9,000 or 1/2%

Dr. Carleton made clear that the large rate of increase for ecumenical projects still leaves us doing much less than most major boards; that our home administrative cost is still below 9% which is not excessive; and that promotion costs have risen largely in an effort to raise our income to a more adequate level.

But the net effect is to leave the American Board in a dilemma: "the choice between closing important and fruitful work in some areas, to give the proper minimum of support to the rest of the work of the Board; and the determination to hold on to the work we have, in faith that the churches will surely sense the grandeur of the calling and give the needed support, not only for all present opportunities but for the others that lie before us."

CALENDAR OF PRAYER

A generation ago the vigorous Roger Babson was Moderator of the Congregational General Council, and embroiled in controversy with other leaders of the denomination. He believed that a Moderator, chief executive of Congregationalism!

In the midst of this turmoil he visited 14 Beacon Street one day, and accepted an invitation to attend Noon Prayers. Asked to say a word to the group he responded:

"I'm having trouble with some other Boards. But not the American Board. It's all right. And do you know why? This daily prayer service is the reason why!"

In a profound sense that remark may be true. To have had at the heart of the daily life of the Board, through many years, a time of common prayer and spiritual quest, has done something to all who share in this service. In my years here this has certainly been true. (Harold B. Belcher at *Noon Prayers* on January 27, 1959)

THE AMERICAN BOARD

14 Beacon Street, Boston 8, Mass.

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Boston, Mass.

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